DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 198 613 EA 012 458

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TITLE "The Creation of New Settings": A New School Society.
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PUB DATE 1 Apr 75
NOTE 14p.
AVAILABLE FROM IMTEC, P.O. Box 79 Blindern, Oslo 3, Norway ($2.00 plus mailing costs).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Affiliated Schools; *Change Strategies; *Educational Change; Educational Cooperation; Educational Development; Educational Environment; Educational Planning; Foreign Countries; *Organizational Change; Power Structure; Program Implementation; Program Proposals; Secondary Education; Social Structure
IDENTIFIERS Europe (West); *Norway

ABSTRACT

This proposal for effective educational change is concerned primarily with the establishment of more appropriate systems for structuring the educational process in Europe following the developments in educational philoscphy during the 1960s. Designed specifically to apply to the educational system in Norway but based on principles applicable to western Europe in general, the proposal attempts to remedy problems in communication, attitude, cooperation, training, and related areas that hamper successful planning and realizatien of innovative relationship patterns among the persons involved in all aspects of education, from members of the community to governmental ministers. The author suggests development, implementation, and financing strategies for these innovations, and identifies several prerequisites for establishment of working relationships among the several national, local, and supra-national educational agencies that would have to be involved in the project. (PGD)

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ED198613

1st April, 1975

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"THE CREATION OF NEW SETTINGS"

A NEW SCHOOL SOCIETY

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Translation from Norwegian by Robert W. Norris
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1. Introduction

The Western world has experienced an enormous expansion in education since the Second World War. Several countries in Europe are going through educational reforms which essentially remind us of our 9-year school reform and the reforms in upper secondary education. In the European context we have been very early both with the development of the 9-year schools and with reforms in our secondary school.

The new reforms lead, among other things, to an integration of existing school types and to a closer co-operation between the school and its surrounding society. New challenges and conditions for the school society are created by the combination of different study categories, by teachers with different backgrounds in one school and by the increased co-operation required with the surrounding environment. School leaders, politicians and researchers in various countries have been considering these new challenges and problems when one tries to create new organisations and new school environments. Our future as humans is tightly tied to the possibilities for creating new, meaningful forms of association. In the meantime we consistently fail in the shaping of new forms of association and when we try to set up organisations that renew themselves we end up with just superficial changes which are experienced only as burdens by those that the renewal process should serve

The following project suggestion tries to give new guidelines for the shaping of better school environments. The ideas that are presented here have been created in conversation with many school people from several countries. They are in many ways unfinished, but we believe they are the most important points and should be discussed further but primarily informally at first.

EA 012 458

What is a school society?

A school society is an organised association of people with a stated goal, defined tasks and resources. The society is regulated by different frame conditions and guidance structures which are most often defined by others than work daily in the society.

The efforts, which are carried out today to try to create new and better school societies, try to integrate two main goals which in and of themselves can easy come in conflict with each other and which, individually, are very difficult to implement. First, there is the desire to create greater equality of educational opportunity with regard to differences which can be found social-economically, geographically, age-wise and sexually. Secondly, we try to create a higher level of participation and individual responsibility among the participants in the new school society.

The conflict often lies in that the new goals and conditions are in conflict with the interests which particular groups, local and nationally, have defended for many years. The dilemma, which one cannot avoid in development projects which seek on the one side to create greater social justice and on the other side create greater creativity and local responsibility, lies within the basic conflicts which exist at the local level and which can disturb the goals which politicians have set for the long range development of schools.

A new school society is a new means of association. New goals and change conditions in the school buildings, in economic questions and in pedagogical questions create new requirements for the individual participant in this society.

We have not paid enough attention to what it is to create a new association, what resources are demanded both at the economical, the scientific and the human level. The individual new society can become isolated because very few people in the new organisation

have experienced a type of self-renewal before and because each local setting has its special challenges which creates special demands on the setting.

Why is it so difficult to succeed?

Because of the above mentioned, we often fail to a greater degree with new schools than, for example, with new hospitals. Many studies show, however, that difficulties with implementation of social change are very complex. There are many problems, but here I shall mention only a few which seem central to the demands placed upon schools today:

1. Unclear expectations. Those who create the conditions for innovations and those responsible for implementing changes at the practical level know very little about each other and have, sometimes, problems in understanding each other's situations. The political, social and pedagogical goals are seldom clearly presented, and the new functions, which should result from the new goals, remain unclear. Possibilities for the innovation resulting in only superficial changes without major consequence for the individual student is potentially close to the surface.

2. School societies are often developed in isolation from the local environment with its very special conditions and needs. We know from large studies made in other countries that the school is only responsible for a very small part of young peoples' learning. The school can only make a modest contribution to motivating young people for continued learning. Only in very close co-operation with the home and local economy can the school play a central function.

3. Most educational innovations demand attitude changes among those effected by the innovation (from politicians to teachers to students). We know very little on how changes in attitudes happen. They certainly do not happen through either local or central direction, through sets of rules or instructions. Possibilities for "sabbotaging"

of the major intentions in the innovation are always present.

4. Association with other groups which have other social expectations and educational qualifications is a problem. Only through a close co-operation between the different teacher categories and student categories and local groups can an integrated school begin to function. Co-operation can happen according to different premises. A major reason for the co-operation failing is that our conditions are unclear and our preparations weak for a democratic development process. Serious lacks in communications exist in most of the situations for innovation. Central authorities and local groups do not know much about each other. Building committees frequently do not involve the users of school services. School planners make plans without engaging teachers. Architects and building consultants work without clear definitions of pedagogical functions. Researchers have little or no contact with the users or school planners. Teacher colleges and other training institutions know very little about the new school society, have little contact with users and only modestly influence the developments of new school societies.

5. The new school society gets very minimal support from outside. Some support comes from central authorities and perhaps local pedagogical centres. This help is often of a technical sort and in combination with the organisation of the educational programme or represents support to the development of educational materials and help in pedagogical evaluation. The building up and organising of the school society, the development of leaders and the training of people for new roles and better use of resources receive very little help from outside.

6. Most new school societies are isolated. They struggle very often against an inbred resistance against "all that new stuff" from local and regional groups.

The new societies seldom have contact with schools in the same situation as they are themselves. It can be considered that a network of schools in the same situation can give each other important support in the building up of new school societies. Few people can foresee the many difficulties which come with the creation of a new setting. Very few have been involved in new settings before and support and help from people who have been through it can be an important help. Up to now many people rely upon "experts" to give advice and direction. Is it not more realistic that the users themselves organise a continuous learning process where they learn from each other? Though this does not lock out the "expert", does it not give the "expert" a new role?

7. We give altogether too little support to the training of people who will occupy new roles. We take it for given that institutional leaders know what is required to build up new settings. We simply believe teachers can function in their new roles. We expect the local environment and especially parents to function in their new roles with no introduction or training. We as pedagogue should be the first to understand the meaning of training as a prerequisite for the creation of a new setting.

8. The majority of new school settings are crippled by the same restrictions, administrative and economical, which the old school settings were afflicted with. Since the new setting is confronted with new responsibilities under different conditions, use of resources and the administrative system of rules should be very flexible. With the freedom to create new and better conditions, we can more easily master the new situation.

9. Usually we develop new systems and schools with a research strategy which puts maximum emphasis on a few pilot schools. Well-tested new methods are next brought over to schools which operate under normal situations. This

usual research strategy is often seen as a vaccination against spreading a new idea. "Usual schools" do not get a large degree of notice, do not get special resources and do not have teachers that are as motivated as the teachers in research situations. Research schools risk very little but get very much. The usual schools risk very much (and they can only loose) and they get very little. The usual school does not "own" the new ideas. Those are developed by others. The ownership of new ideas is central if we desire innovation which is going to involve important attitude changes.

10. It is at the implementation stage of innovation that most of the difficulties actually lie. It is necessary to build in a strategy for innovation in all new school societies. With this thought in mind, we probably should modify the traditional research strategy.

Can we create a new school setting in a better way?

We do not have time here to take up the entire question of development strategies for our schools. No matter what kind of strategy one chooses for change and innovation there are different types of problems that occur. In this connection we take up below some of the frame factors that can lead to a development of a new school setting in the upper secondary schools now being planned in many West European school reforms (and Norway is right now in a situation where strategies for further development must be developed accurately). The following frame factors we think are important:

1. We must develop a better co-operation around the total development process from the basic planning of new schools to the implementation of school reforms in operation. The contact that is beginning to exist today between theory and practice, between local and central authorities, and between people in institutions and groups outside must be strengthened.

2. The users, particularly teachers and local groups, must become involved far more thoroughly in the forming of their own living environments.

3. The pedagogical and social functions which are new in the planned school settings must be better defined so that we can more easily implement these functions in a concrete school environment.

4. The building of new schools ought to happen to a much greater degree with the co-operation among counties. Important economic savings can be counted on with such a co-operative effort.

5. With the perspective in mind that in Norway in the next 15 years something around a hundred new upper secondary schools will be built, the first of these schools ought to be built on the basis of a "growth through learning" project, that is to say that experiences from one school will be translated to the next as a basis for further planning and development. (Refer to the IMTEC case study of Bjørkelangen school centre and Østre Toten combined upper secondary school.)

6. Communication between schools in the same situation ought to be organised for a maximum exchange of experiences and services.

7. International experience, among others through the OECD's School Buildings Project, teacher curriculum development projects and the IMTEC project itself, can be brought to much better use in Norway than it is today.

8. More should be invested in the development of leadership, work environment, co-operation, problem solving and organisational development in the individual new school settings(1). The Swedish "Plus-prosjektet" is an interesting experiment in this direction.

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(1) New models for leadership training ought to be tested out, among others team development and use of leadership teams from one school in the development process with another school in a co-operative group.

9. New methods and aids which are desired to be developed, should, as much as possible, be developed by and for those who shall use them. Conditions should be created so that teachers can develop materials on a small scale.

10. There should be greater flexibility in the utilisation of economic resources, including more flexible use of salaried personnel in the school setting.

How can these conditions be brought about?

Basically we must establish that the problems in the development of school settings do not lie in the planning phase but in the implementation phase. Several important aids stand ready to be used by those who plan and develop school reforms. For those who shall implement plans and ideas in practice the situation is considerably more difficult. It is necessary today to build up an administrative expertise as well as expertise in the pedagogical, building technique and research areas which can be used to the advantage of individual countries which today are right in the middle of implementing reforms in upper secondary education. With this as a target, we suggest that a development project be based upon the following principles:

1. A pilot project should be created in Norway which will utilise, to a maximum degree, the experience which exists nationally and internationally in the area of settings creation. Other countries stand ready to learn from the Norwegian experience, as well as vice versa. Several countries (Germany, Finland, Holland) have shown interest for the setting up of similar projects which can lead to useful information for the Norwegian project, as well as vice versa.

2. A network of approximately 10 new upper secondary schools, which will be built in the next three to five years, should be chosen as co-operative schools.

3. The project will encompass three phases of development, namely basic planning, building and implementation (the first two years of the school's operation).

4. The individual local school settings shall influence to a maximum degree the forming of their own environment in co-operation with the local, regional and central authorities and with the resource persons who can be utilised by the project.

5. The OECD's technical expertise should be utilised to the fullest through IMTEC's organisation in Norway. Among others, one can expect resources in the following areas: information on new school buildings, consultant and architect expertise, information on consultant help about the development of team training, consultant services for organisational development, inclusive of the development of new administrative techniques.

How can the project be financed?

The project does not demand new financial resources, but is based upon better utilisation of the resources that already exist centrally, regionally and locally in Norway. As the situation is today, we usually build and finance each single school individually. In addition, there is a relatively rigid set of conditions for the use of resources which go into the daily operating budgets of schools. Both of these basic frame factors bind resources which eventually could be used much better and more freely and could give much greater possibilities for learning, particularly in the period when learning is most critical to the future of the project.

Plan for financing

1. Savings of building charges

The OECD's special project for the building sector has discovered many means of saving money through the better planning of school buildings. These savings can be as large as 15% of the total building cost. The conditions vary from country to country, and a closer analysis is necessary in order to define more accurately

the savings that could be counted on in the Norwegian situation. It goes without saying that the savings which come from buildings would not be directly related to project financing but would come to the advantage of each community and county participating in the project.

2. Making consultant services more effective

On average the architect and consultant service charge for school buildings lie between 12-15% today of the total cost of the building. These are realistic charges going out of the methods by which schools are planned today, particularly when they are planned on an individual basis. If we base a project upon ten pilot schools designed ten different ways, but growing out of the same project, the charges for the technical part of the building side can be noticeably reduced. A Norwegian firm has indicated that large savings can be reached through a similar type of co-operation. The evaluations vary somewhat, but it is realistic to count on a reduction of the consultant charges from 13½% to around 9-10% of the total building cost. This spells a savings of around 4%. The prerequisite from the technical side of the building is that the firm in question can count on the contract for a total of ten school that the pedagogical and organisational experiences will be available for the project's usage. It is possible that a project of this nature (where a number of resources are integrated) can lead to the creation of expertise in the consultant firm which can lead further to an important Norwegian resource for the many needs that will be created in the future in building more schools.

3. Flexible use of the school's operating budget

Through the studies of starting up of new schools, we have found that most schools have troubles with the utilisation of their resources, particularly

in the first two to three years. One possibility for better utilisation of resources is more flexible budgeting and greater individual responsibility in the management of institutional resources. IMTEC has not made an analysis of this question concerning the Norwegian upper secondary school reform, but conversations with Norwegian school leadership people have convinced us that similar problems exist in Norway. If other resource utilisation policies can be brought about, this can mean a savings of around 5% of the operating budget of each school per year. (Some of these savings will have to be based upon negotiations with teacher organisations.)

4. Usual state contribution

In most of the experiments and reforms in Norway, the state has offered contributions to the design of courses for teachers as well as putting resources at the disposition of experiments and research work. It is assumed that the ten schools which eventually would be chosen in this project would be offered these same resources similar to other schools in the same situation.

The resources which could perhaps be saved through the rationalising of consultant services, greater flexibility in the budget as well as the usual contributions from central authorities, can give adequate resources for the creation of a major support project. Specifics of this project are given below.

Project prerequisites

A project of this nature can be created through co-operation between county, central authorities and IMTEC. A number of prerequisites must be worked out through conversations and consultations, and in the items below we have outlined conditions which we see as necessary starting points:

1. The Ministry of Education ought to be primarily responsible for the choice of the counties and schools which would be in the project after consultation with the Council for Upper Secondary Education and IMTEC.

2. A directing group will be selected consisting of representatives from the Ministry, the Council for Upper Secondary Education, the National Council for Innovation in Education, the countries which will participate and IMTEC. The directing group will report to the Ministry, or that organ that the Ministry names in co-operation with the involved counties and to IMTEC's Directing Group.

3. A contract will be made with a well established Norwegian consulting firm on the planning and design of ten buildings under normal conditions, however with an agreement on reduction of the consultant charge (to around - 9-10%). The directing group ought to be responsible for the selection of the consulting firm, and each county must individually be in agreement with the choice. The consulting firm must have experiance with the programming of the building operation as well as solid knowledge on the factors that influence building costs.

4. The Ministry would offer the OECD, through IMTEC's project, a voluntary contribution yearly to lead the development of the project. The contribution would be based upon the financial plan given above. The Ministry would cover their contribution through agreements with the involved counties.

5. Each individual county which participates in the project would get a guarantee from the project leadership that the implementation of each individual school will meet economic and pedagogical prerequisites. A major economic prerequisite is that the local economic environment shall be used by the school to the greatest possible degree.

6. All experience in the project will be offered for free to all interested people in Norway and in other OECD countries. Various Norwegian agencies (for example the Council for Upper Secondary Education) will be responsible for the spreading of the experience in Norway. IMTEC would be responsible for spreading the experience internationally and for gathering international experience.

7. A yearly budget for the project would be worked out by the directing group in co-operation with IMTEC's Secretariat. The budget would be presented before the IMTEC Directing Group and approved by OECD's budget committee.

8. All control of the project budget would happend through the OECD's financial controller.

9. It is assumed that the budget which would be developed each year for the project would be used according to the following objectives:

a. Covering of the charges for the development and implementation of training courses for teachers, leaders students, parents and others in the local environment of the school.

b. A core group / selected from the approximately three hundred employees of the ten new schools would receive consultant payments in their work in spreading the experiences they have in creating settings.

c. Money will be spent for IMTEC's international Fellows and consultants that will be brought to use in the project.

d. Funds will go to the project staff which will consist probably of a leader, a researcher, and a secretary as well as some part-time consultancy services.

e. Funds will also be available for publications and seminars for the spreading of the various experiences.